

I love reading biographies of remarkable people. They teach me so much.

Right now, I'm reading Walter Isaacson's biography of Leonardo da Vinci. Leonardo was the epitome of the "Renaissance man"—an artist, inventor, architect, military engineer, and draftsman, among other things.

But as I read about his incredible life, I was struck by a thought: "If Leonardo had been born today, would he have achieved the same level of greatness?"

There's no doubt that Leonardo had natural talent. But most scholars agree that it was his insatiable curiosity, not his inborn ability, that made him so exceptional.

He would spend hours simply observing the way a bird's wings flapped, studying another artist's work, writing poetry, or simply doodling in his journals—more than 7,000 pages of which have survived.

Human beings have had time for this kind of reverie, contemplation, and solitude for the vast majority of our human history.

Today, not so much.

Thanks to modern technologies like smartphones, many of us rarely, if ever, get a chance to experience ourselves and the world around us with this kind of attention and focus.

I think this is yet another "mismatch" that is driving chronic "dis-ease"—one that's just as important as diet, physical activity, sleep, and the other ways that our modern lifestyle is mismatched with what our genes and biology require. Yet we often don't realize its impact on us.

This is one reason why I'm such a fan of "digital detoxes."

It's so important for us to have periods of time when we're not interacting with technology ... when our minds are free to wander and explore, when we're able to simply be present with ourselves and our surroundings.

We need this time not only to be healthy, but to fulfill our full potential.

Just like Leonardo did.

Visit Chris Kresser's website or check out his podcast on taking a digital detox.